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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Flood waters from McKay Creek surround a tractor and inundate a field of lavender at the Lavender Road Botanicals farm off of Southwest 44th Street on Wednesday in Pendleton.

People hit by McKay Creek flooding look for answers, promises

By PHIL WRIGHT
East Oregonian

One questioned matters most in the wake of the worst flooding Pendleton experienced in more than 20 years: What do you do to make sure this never happens again?

Pendleton Mayor John Turner said that was the question he heard over and over during the flooding along McKay Creek. The weekend emergency prompted the community to rally and help neighbors keep rushing muddy waters at bay from homes in the town's south end. Around 130 or more attended Wednesday night's meeting at Sherwood Heights Elementary School to hear the latest information on the flood. And one man felt the heat of the central question: Sean Kimbrel.

Kimbrel is the Bureau of Reclamation's field office manager in charge of McKay Reservoir, which at the peak of the flooding dumped more than 2,700 cubic feet of water per second into McKay Creek. He joined officials from the National Weather Service, the Oregon Health Authority and the city of Pendleton to deliver the overall picture of the cause of the flood and what is happening in the aftermath. Instead of holding an audience-wide question-and-answer session afterward, the speakers broke out to answer questions one-on-one.

Shawn Penninger, Pendleton assistant fire chief, drew no one. The same for Marc Austin with the National



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Steve Alderman pulls a weed while checking a lavender plant on Wednesday at Lavender Road Botanicals farm in Pendleton.

"I WANT YOU TO PAY FOR THE DAMAGE. YOU PUT US AT RISK."

Carl Scheeler, speaking at a meeting Wednesday

Weather Service. But a couple dozen swarmed around Kimbrel.

He stood with his back to the wall while locals demanded answers. Carl Scheeler for a while led the interrogation.

"I want you to pay for the damage," Scheeler asserted.

Others echoed that. Kimbrel said they would need to file a tort claim. In other words, a lawsuit under the Federal Tort Claims Act.

That answer did not satisfy the mob, and faces grew red.

Scheeler stated the bureau was negligent in how it handed the release from McKay Reservoir into the creek. The federal agency should have realized days sooner it needed to make room for the heavy rain and melting snow.

"You put us at risk," Scheeler stated to Kimbrel.

Pendleton police Sgt. Paul Woverton slipped in and stood near Kimbrel, who told Scheeler and the several who

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Two vie for Port of Morrow board seat

Race draws two longtime Morrow County figures

by JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
East Oregonian

Two longtime Morrow County residents will vie for a spot on the Port of Morrow board, as its current occupant vacates the position after more than 50 years.

John Murray and Debbie Radie are contending for Position 5 on the Port of Morrow Board of Commissioners. Current commissioner Larry Lindsay has been in the role for 52 years. He was first elected to the commission in 1969, nine years after it started. His term expires June 30. The special district election is May 21.

Since Lindsay was first elected to that position, the port has gone through massive transitions and growth, and in 2017, generated more than \$2.77 billion in economic output. It's home to a growing workforce development program, as well as several clean energy projects and Amazon data centers.

Both Murray and Radie said they're not looking to make big changes, but instead continue on the path the port is already on. Both have held prominent positions in Morrow County's business community for decades, and both said that longtime commitment led them to run for a role on the port board. Murray is the owner of Murray's Drug, which has locations in Heppner and Boardman, as well as Condon in Gilliam County. Radie is the vice president of operations for Boardman Foods, which processes onions and is located at the Port of Morrow.

Radie has been in Morrow County for about 27 years, and has been with Boardman Foods since that time. She said Boardman Foods was one of the first companies that longtime manager Gary Neal, who recently retired, attracted to the port.

She said she has been involved with various community service activities over the years, and hopes to continue that at the port.

"I was asked by some people I highly respect, who work at the port and know my skills, who said they'd like to see me run," Radie said. "When I thought about it, I understood why it's important for me to run. I feel it's an opportunity for me to give back my time and energy."

She said in her time with Boardman Foods, she has worked with port staff and the community, and

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UMATILLA

Engineers say bridge replacement may cost between \$3.2 and \$4.3M

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Umatilla is looking at between \$3.2 million and \$4.3 million to replace its pedestrian bridge across the Umatilla River.

The bridge partially collapsed sometime late Saturday night or early Sunday morning as the Umatilla River ran unusually high and fast. Engineers performed an evaluation for the city on Tuesday.

City manager David Stockdale said the engineers were not able to definitively rule the bridge a total loss because the floodwaters

were still too high to properly assess the abutments. But they felt fairly confident it would not be salvageable.

The city had an 18-inch water main running through the bridge, and Stockdale said the engineers said demolishing and replacing the bridge with the water main would be a \$3.2 million project. If government agencies decide that the water main needs to be run under the river instead of along the bridge, that would bump the estimated project cost up to \$4.3 million.

The good news, Stockdale said, is Umatilla County emergency man-

ager Tom Roberts said the price tag might be what puts the county over the damage threshold to receive federal and state disaster funds for recovery. The city council passed a resolution declaring a city emergency on Tuesday night.

Stockdale said the city wants to replace the bridge as soon as possible, but it will likely take more than a year to do so.

The bridge, built in 1978, connects Umatilla's South Hill neighborhoods to downtown. It is about half a mile west of Umatilla High



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

A portion of the pedestrian bridge over the Umatilla River near Umatilla High School collapsed sometime late Saturday night or early Sunday morning.

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